

THE CALVARY ROAD

Roy Hession



The Calvary Road

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Foreword

I count it a privilege and honor to write the foreword for *The Calvary Road*—a famous book that God has chosen to use in phenomenal ways, in my own life and in the lives of people around the world. It had such an impact on me that it was required reading for many years at Operation Mobilisation, a ministry that I founded in 1957. It also helped me form a lifelong link with CLC Publications, the ministry that still publishes Hession's books in the United States and internationally to this day.

This book first came into my hands as a young Christian student and it proved to be helpful later on in my life as well. In the early days of our marriage, my wife, Drena, and I lived on the floor in the back of a bookshop in Mexico City. We were already having some difficulties in our relationship. God used this

book to break me and show me my sin, especially the sins of impatience and irritability. If you have any difficulty in those areas, then this is the book for you.

As I read *The Calvary Road* during our days in that bookshop, I never would have dreamed that I would spend most of my life ministering and living in the United Kingdom, or that Roy Hession would become a close friend and associate.

Only heaven will tell the full story of Roy Hession and the lives he influenced, both during his life and after his promotion to glory. For years, I watched him live out the message of his book and inspire others to do so as well. He sparked a movement of revival and grace that had roots in the famous East African revival so many decades ago, but is still flourishing today.

For over sixty years, God has used *The Calvary Road*, and Hession's other books, in over eighty languages with over a million copies sold—and I suspect that He will use it for many years to come.

I pray that you will allow the message of this book to become part of your life. I pray

also that you will be proactive in distributing the book to others.

—George Verwer, DD
Founder, Operation Mobilisation
2016

Preface to the 1973 Edition

This little book was first published in 1950. With the passage of years, I am now even more sure that the truths expressed in these pages lie at the heart of all those movements of revival by which God restored His church to new life in the hours of her dryness and need. Such movements of revival are not only glorious memories of the past, but are taking place right now in various parts of the world.

The outward forms of such revivals do differ considerably, of course. But, the inward and permanent content of them all is always the same: a new experience of conviction of sin among the saints; a new vision of the cross of Jesus and of redemption; a new willingness on our part for brokenness, repentance, confession and restitution; a joyful experience of the power of the blood

of Jesus to cleanse fully from sin and restore and heal all that our sin has lost and broken; a new entering into the fullness of the Holy Spirit and of His power to do His own work through His people; and a new gathering in of the lost ones to Jesus.

Inasmuch as this is just what is happening now in various parts of the world, these pages have a special relevance for the reader today. I trust they may, by the blessing of God, be the means of helping many others come to the cross and present themselves as candidates for revival, by the confession of their emptiness and failure.

For revival is not a green valley getting greener, but a valley full of dry bones being made to live again and stand up an exceedingly great army (see Ezek. 37:1-14). It is not good Christians becoming better Christians—because as God sees us there are not any good Christians.

But rather, revival is Christians honestly confessing that their Christian life is a valley of dry bones and by that very confession, qualifying for the grace that flows from the cross and makes all things new.

This little book expresses the truths that lie at the heart of revival simply because it is itself the product of revival. As long ago as 1930, God began to work in a new way in the infant church in Rwanda, East Africa. Infant that it was, it carried the seeds of decay within it; but it was a decay that God began to change into glorious fruit when revival came.

In the years that followed, the blessing of revival spread to the churches in the neighboring countries of Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania. A great multitude of Africans, and the missionaries among them, not only came to know Christ as their personal Savior, but also began to live a quality of life rarely experienced in even the most evangelical churches of the West.

That movement of revival has continued in East Africa to the present day, if not in one part then in another, with all the vicissitudes and battles that one would naturally expect of a movement of life.

In 1947, I had been doing full-time evangelistic work in Great Britain for a number of years, but had come into a state of great

spiritual need. I had somehow lost the power of the Holy Spirit, which I once had known in the work of the Lord. Yet, I still had to continue to conduct evangelistic campaigns without His power—a terrible experience!

I was rather like that son of the prophets in Elisha's school who lost his axe head while chopping down a tree (see 2 Kings 6:1-7), but who perhaps, for a few strokes at least, continued to chop with just the handle and wondered why he was making no progress with his work!

Ignorant of what had really happened, I redoubled my efforts and became increasingly tense and forceful. This is all a poor substitute for the Spirit's gentle penetrating power. It is, of course, only in looking back that I can describe my situation in this way. At the time, I was all too ignorant of my need.

In April 1947, I invited several missionaries from East Africa to come as speakers to an Easter Conference that I was organizing. I had heard that they had been experiencing in their field for a number of years. As an evangelist, I was interested in revival.

What they had to say was very different from much of what I had associated with the word *revival*. It was very simple and very quiet. As they unfolded their message and gave their testimonies, I discovered that I was the neediest person in the conference and was far more in need of revival than I had ever realized.

That discovery, however, came slowly to me. Being myself one of the speakers, I suppose I was more concerned about others' needs than my own.

As my wife and others humbled themselves before God and experienced the cleansing of the blood of Jesus, I found myself left somewhat high and dry. I was humbled by the simplicity of the message, or rather the simplicity of what I had to do to be revived and filled with the Spirit. When at the end of the conference others testified as to how Jesus had broken them at His cross and filled their hearts to overflowing with His Spirit, I had no such testimony.

It was only afterward that I was enabled to give up trying to fit things into my doctrinal scheme and come humbly to the cross

for cleansing from my own personal sins. It was like beginning my Christian life all over again. My flesh was “restored like the flesh of a little child” (2 Kings 5:14), as did Naaman’s when he was willing to humble himself and dip himself in the Jordan River.

It has been an altogether new chapter in my life since then. It has meant that I have had to choose constantly to die to the big “I”, so that Jesus might be all, and constantly come to Him for cleansing in His precious blood. But, that is why it is called a new chapter.

The things I learned, at that time and in the months that followed, I committed to paper and published mostly as articles, and later collected together to form this book. In the years that have followed its publication, its distribution has spread throughout the whole English-speaking world and it has been translated into some forty languages—to the astonishment of no one more than the one who penned it.

Its wide dissemination is simply the evidence of the hunger of Christians throughout the world for reality and a Christianity that really works.

More than that, it is one of many evidences that “it is the time to favor [Zion]; / the appointed time has come” (Ps. 102:13), and that God’s purpose to build again “the walls of Jerusalem that were broken down” (Neh. 2:13) is coming to pass.

It must not be thought that this book represents a purely personal contribution on my part. The things I recorded in this book have been learned in fellowship with others in various parts who have begun to walk the way of the cross in a new way. Any one of a number in that fellowship could have written these chapters equally well.

It is a fellowship, too, that is continually growing, for an ever-increasing number of lives have been greatly influenced around the world, as teams have gone to this and that country and numerous tours have been undertaken.

This fact, I think, adds to the strength and significance of what is written here. One realizes, of course, that this stream of blessing of which one has been a part is but one of a number of streams of new life—all of which emanate from the same source of the cross

and contribute to the deeply needed revival of the church.

*Leaving the mountain, the streamlet grows,
Flooding the vale with a river;
So, from the hill of the cross, there flows
Life more abundant forever.¹*

Over the years some have occasionally questioned the use of the term *revival* to describe the sort of message and experience expressed in this book. They point to the fact that they cannot see any spectacular religious awakening, involving great numbers of people and many turning to the Lord, such as is popularly associated with the word *revival*.

Somehow, we have never been able to accede to this objection. Rather, we would doggedly insist that the things we have been learning over these years, some of which are written in these chapters, are the very essence of revival.

These things we've learned would, if widely responded to and deeply applied, result indeed in the widest revival of the church—as wide as the response to the call to brokenness at the cross. Certainly for those who have

humbled themselves under the hand of God at that place where sins are washed away, it has meant the revival of their Christian lives in the truest and simplest sense of the word. There are indeed now ever-expanding beachheads of revival in many hearts, fellowships, churches and lands.

It is for those in whose hearts Jesus has established such beachheads to hold fast the vision that what they have discovered and are continually discovering in experience is revival indeed, and to know that God's establishment of such beachheads is surely but the prelude for His invasion in mighty and wide-ranging power into our situations of need.

As I write, heartening news comes that His invasions in power are in fact occurring in this and that place; God is reviving His church in this wider way according to His sovereign grace. May we be willing in this, the day of His power!

This leads me to say a word about the necessary attitude of heart for you, the reader. If God is to bless you at all through these pages, then you must come to them with a deep

hunger of heart. You must be possessed with a dissatisfaction of the state of the church in general, and of yourself in particular—especially of yourself. You must be willing for God to begin His work in yourself first, rather than in the other. You must, moreover, be possessed with the holy expectancy that God can and will meet your need.

If you are in any sense a Christian leader, the urgency of the matter is intensified many times over. Your willingness to admit your need and be blessed will determine the degree to which God can bless the people to whom you minister.

Above all, you must realize that you must be the first to humble yourself at the cross. If a new honesty with regard to sin is needed among your people, you must begin with yourself.

It was when the king of Nineveh arose from his throne, covered himself with sackcloth and sat in ashes as a sign of his repentance, that his people repented (see Jon. 3).

Let not, however, those readers who are not leaders be tempted to look at those who are and wait for them. God wants to begin

with each one of us. He wants to begin with *you*.

May God bless us all.

—Roy Hession
February 1973

Introduction

I am sure from my own experience, as well as from what we have seen in the ranks of our mission in the years since *The Calvary Road* was published, that what Roy Hession—with the help of his wife, Revel—tells us about in these pages is one of God’s vital words to His worldwide church today. For long I regarded revival only from the angle of some longed for, but very rare, sudden outpouring of the Spirit on a company of people.

I felt that there was a missing link somewhere. Knowing of the continuing revival on a certain mission field, and because it was continuing and not merely sudden and passing, I long felt that Roy and Revel had a further secret we needed to learn. Then we had the chance for heart-to-heart fellowship with them, first through one of our own missionary leaders whose life and ministry had

been transformed by a visit to that field; then, through conferences with some of their missionaries on furlough; finally, through the privilege of having two of the national brethren living at our headquarters for six months.

From them I learned and saw that revival is most importantly personal and immediate. It is the constant experience of even the simplest Christian who “walk[s] in the light” (1 John 1:7). I saw that walking in the light means an altogether new sensitivity to sin. It means calling things that are often passed over as merely human reaction—pride, hardness, doubt, fear, self-pity—by their proper name of sin. It means a readiness to “break” and confess at the feet of Him who was broken for us. The blood does not cleanse excuses, but it always cleanses sin, confessed as sin; then, revival is just the daily experience of a soul full of Jesus and running over.

Further, we are beginning to learn, as a company of Christ’s witnesses, that the rivers of life to the world do not flow out in their fullness through one person, but through the body, the team. Our brokenness and openness must be two-way—horizontal as well as

vertical; with one another, as with God. We are just beginning to experience in our own ranks that teamwork in the Spirit is one of the keys to revival, and that we have to learn and practice the laws of a living fellowship.

I need not say more, as Roy Hession expounds on the whole matter. But, we have seen God at work in our midst. I could name half a dozen of our workers, several of them leaders, whose lives have had a new spiritual revolution. Rivulets of blessing in some of our individual lives have been merging in a larger stream. God has been giving us times as a company of believers when as we prayed, “the place in which [we] were gathered together was shaken, and [we] were all filled with the Holy Spirit” (Acts 4:31). Here and there on our battlefields, distant and near, we hear the sound of abundant rain; and we believe among many companies of God’s people He is preparing afresh for these last days a “threshing sledge, / new, sharp, and having teeth” (Isa. 41:15). We believe that what God is saying to us through this revival, and through the interpretation of that revival message in this book, is a word of the Lord

for our day. May it be greatly used to produce revived lives, revived fellowships and revived churches.

—Norman P. Grubb

Honorary Secretary, Worldwide Evangelization Crusade (WEC)
London, 1950

1

Brokenness

We want to be very simple in this matter of revival. Revival is just the life of the Lord Jesus poured into human hearts. Jesus is always victorious. In heaven, they are praising Him all the time for His victory. Whatever may be our experience of failure and barrenness, He is never defeated. His power is boundless. We, on our part, only have to get into a right relationship with Him and we shall see His power being demonstrated in our hearts and lives and service, and His victorious life will fill us and overflow through us to others. And that is revival in its essence.

If, however, we are to come into this right relationship with Him, the first thing we

must learn is that our wills must be broken to His will.

To be broken is the beginning of revival. It is painful and it is humiliating, but it is the only way. It is saying, “It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me” (Gal. 2:20), and a “C” is a bent “I.”

The Lord Jesus cannot live in us fully and reveal Himself through us until the proud self within us is broken. This simply means that the hard unyielding self—which justifies itself, wants its own way, stands up for its rights and seeks its own glory—at last bows its head to God’s will, admits its wrongs, gives up its own way to Jesus, surrenders its rights and discards its own glory. This is done so that the Lord Jesus might have all and be all. In other words, it is dying to self and selfish attitudes.

And as we look honestly at our Christian lives, we can see how much of this self there is in each of us. It is so often self who tries to live the Christian life—the mere fact that we use the word *try* indicates that it is self who has the responsibility. It is self, too, who is often doing Christian work. It is always self

who gets irritable and envious and resentful and critical and worried. It is self who is hard and unyielding in its attitudes to others. It is self who is shy and self-conscious and reserved. No wonder we need breaking.

As long as self is in control, God can do little with us; for the fruit of the Spirit (see Gal. 5), which God longs to fill us with, is the complete antithesis of the hard, unbroken spirit within us and presupposes that self has been crucified.

Being broken is both God's work and ours. He brings His pressure to bear, but we have to make the choice. If we are really open to conviction as we seek fellowship with God—and willingness for the light is the prime condition of fellowship with God—God will show us the expressions of this proud, hard self that cause Him pain. It is then that we can stiffen our necks and refuse to repent, or we can bow the head and say, "Yes, Lord."

Brokenness in daily experience is simply the response of humility to the conviction of God. Inasmuch as this conviction is continuous, we shall need to be broken continually. This can be very costly when we see all the

yielding of rights and selfish interests that this will involve, and the confessions and restitutions that may be sometimes necessary.

For this reason, we are not likely to be broken except at the cross of Jesus. The willingness of Jesus to be broken for us is the all-compelling motive in our being broken as well. We see Him, who is in the form of God, counting not equality with God a prize to be grasped at and hung on to, but letting it go for us and taking upon Him the form of a servant—God’s Servant, man’s Servant (see Phil. 2:5–11).

We see Him willing to have no rights of His own, willing to let men revile Him and not revile in return, willing to let men tread on Him and not retaliate or defend Himself.

Above all, we see Him broken as He meekly goes to Calvary to become humanity’s scapegoat by bearing their sins in His own body on the tree. In a pathetic passage in a prophetic psalm, He says, “I am a worm and not a man” (Ps. 22:6).

Those who have been in tropical lands tell us that there is a big difference between a snake and a worm, when you attempt to strike

at them. The snake rears itself up, hisses and tries to strike back—a true picture of self.

But a worm offers no resistance. It allows you to do what you like with it, kick it or squash it under your heel. It is a picture of true brokenness. And Jesus was willing to become just that for us—a worm and not a man. And He did so, because that is what He saw us to be: worms having forfeited all rights by our sin, except to deserve hell. And He now calls us to take our rightful place as worms for Him and with Him.

The entire Sermon on the Mount with its teaching of non-retaliation, love for enemies and selfless giving, assumes that to be our position. But only the vision of the love that was willing to be broken for us can constrain us to be willing for that worm-like position.

*Lord, bend that proud and stiff-necked I,
 Help me to bow the head and die;
 Beholding Him on Calvary,
 Who bowed His head for me.¹*

But dying to self is not a thing we do once and for all. There may be an initial dying when God first shows these things, but ever

after it will be a constant dying. Only then can the Lord Jesus be revealed constantly through us (see 2 Cor. 4:10). All day long, the choice will be before us in a thousand ways.

It will mean no plans, no time, no money and no pleasure of our own. It will mean a constant yielding to those around us, for our yieldedness to God is measured by our yieldedness to others. Every humiliation and everyone who tries to vex us is God's way of breaking us, so that there is a yet deeper channel in us for the life of Christ.

You see, the only life that pleases God and that can be victorious is His life—never our life, no matter how hard we try. But inasmuch as our self-centered life is the exact opposite of His, we can never be filled with His life unless we are prepared for God to bring our life constantly to death. In that we must cooperate by our moral choice.